

# Zara Shares Her STRIPES

A story about accepting your rare condition



Content developed by  
Alexion, AstraZeneca Rare Disease



*Zara Shares Her Stripes*

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# Animal Park

“The hope that comes from finding others that are rare like you is positively life-altering. With this book, my wish for your child is that they always feel surrounded by love and support.”

— Anndria

“Being able to share your struggles with those around you is a huge blessing because not only do they get to know the real you, but they also get to join you in fighting your battles.”

— Deja

“Rare diseases provide a rare opportunity to educate others and bring them closer to you.”

— Kristin





Today is Zara's first day at the Animal Park, her new home. She is nervous to meet the other animals because she is a very special zebra.

Zara has rainbow stripes, but she doesn't want the other animals to know. None of the zebras at her old home had such rare stripes, so she felt awkward.



Each morning, Zara paints over her stripes. Every night, she washes the paint off before bedtime.





Just as Zara puts the finishing touches on her stripes, she hears a voice cry out. "Hello, new neighbor!"

She turns and sees a giraffe...with star-shaped spots! "My name is Gabby. Welcome to the animal park."

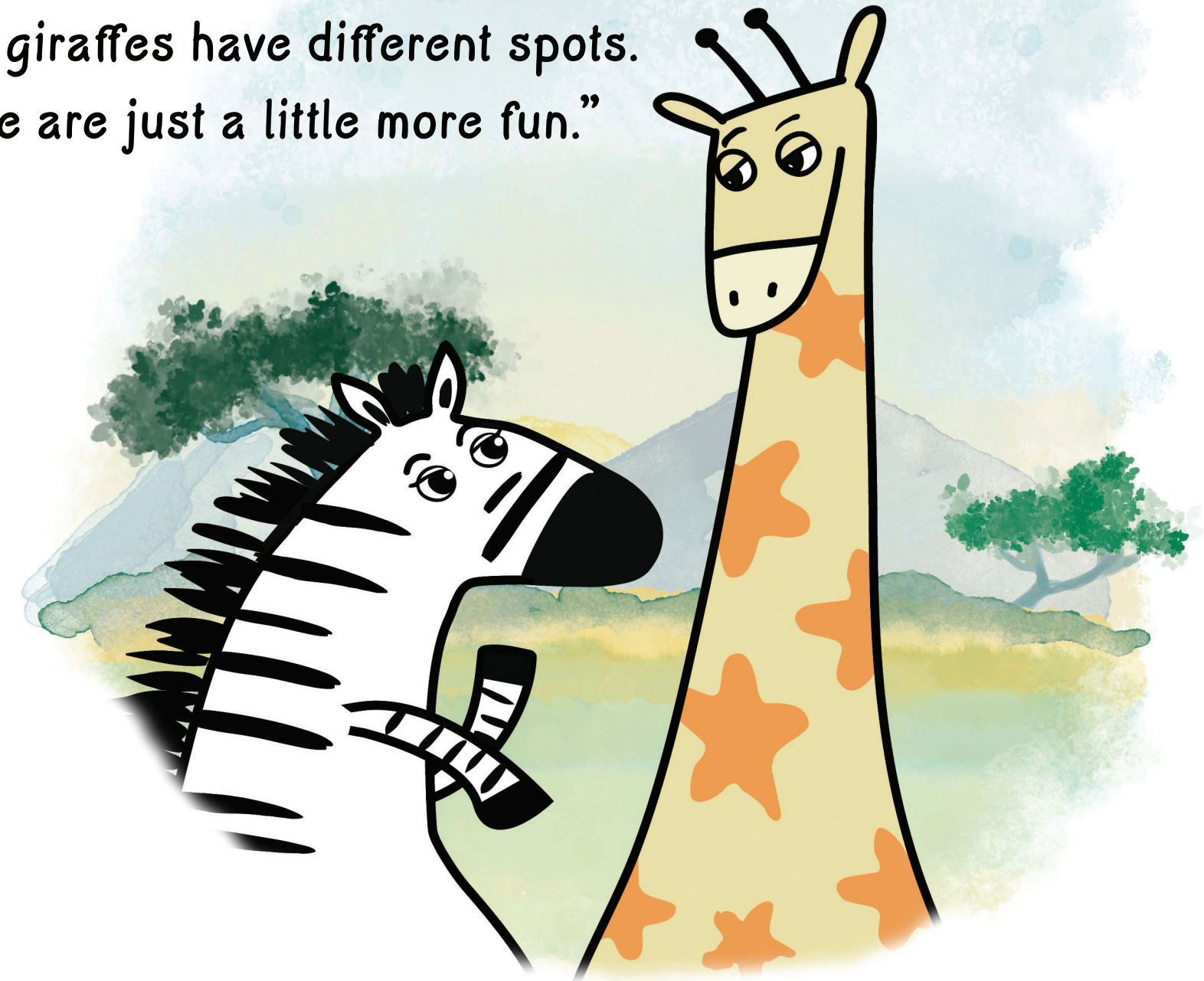


"Your spots are beautiful," Zara says.

"How are they so pretty?"

"I was born with them," Gabby says.

"All giraffes have different spots. Mine are just a little more fun."







“Do you like having star-shaped spots?” Zara asks.

“I do now. I learned that my spots are what make me special,” Gabby says. “Not everything that makes us different can be hidden. And they shouldn’t have to be.”

“That’s a really good point,” Zara replies. She glances down at her painted stripes and wonders what Gabby would think of them.

“It’s almost time for your welcome party,” Gabby says. “Let’s go meet everyone!”





When they arrive at the party, they meet a lion cutting up a pineapple. "I want you to meet Lyle. He's one of my best friends," says Gabby.

"Hi there. Would you like some fruit?" Lyle asks, offering a slice of pineapple to Zara.



Less than 10% of rare diseases have an approved treatment option.

"I didn't know lions ate fruit," Zara says.

"Most lions eat meat, but I have a rare condition that means when I do, I don't feel very good. My doctor said I could eat lots of fruits and vegetables instead!"

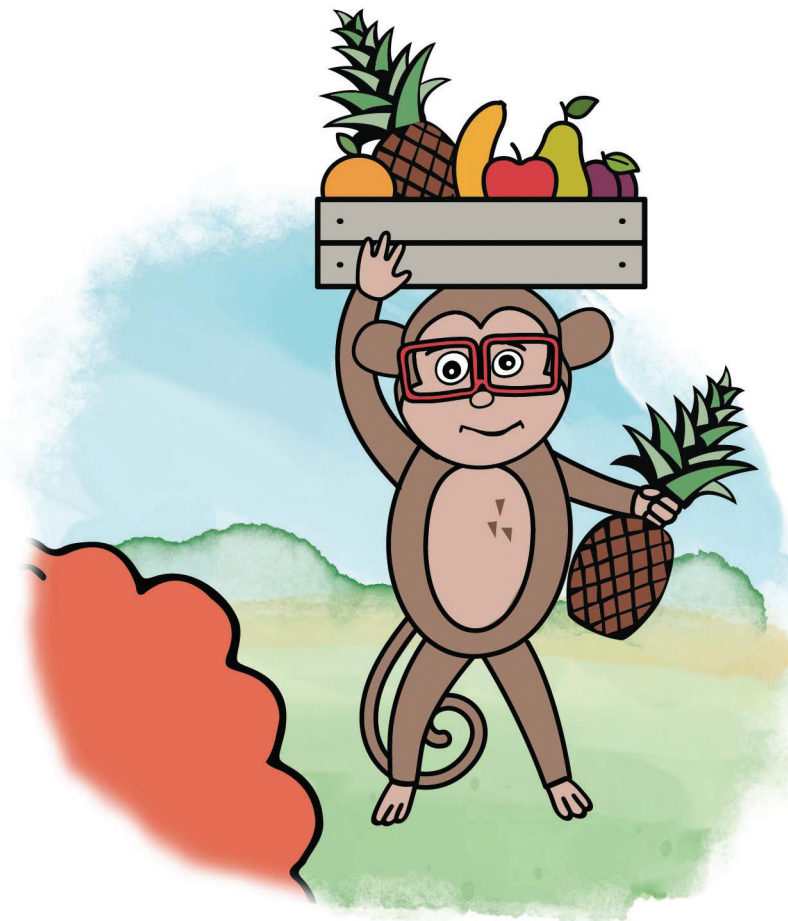




Zara asks, “Is it healthy to eat only fruits and vegetables?”

“You can have a healthy diet without eating meat,” Lyle says. “Some animals only eat fruits and vegetables, while some only eat meat. Some animals even eat both!”

“Is it difficult to get fruits and vegetables here?” Zara asks.



“Not at all,” Lyle replies. “I told the other animals, so they help me find food.”



As the party continues, Zara sees some of the other animals playing musical stones. When the music stops, everyone tries to sit, but there's no stone left for Morty the Monkey.

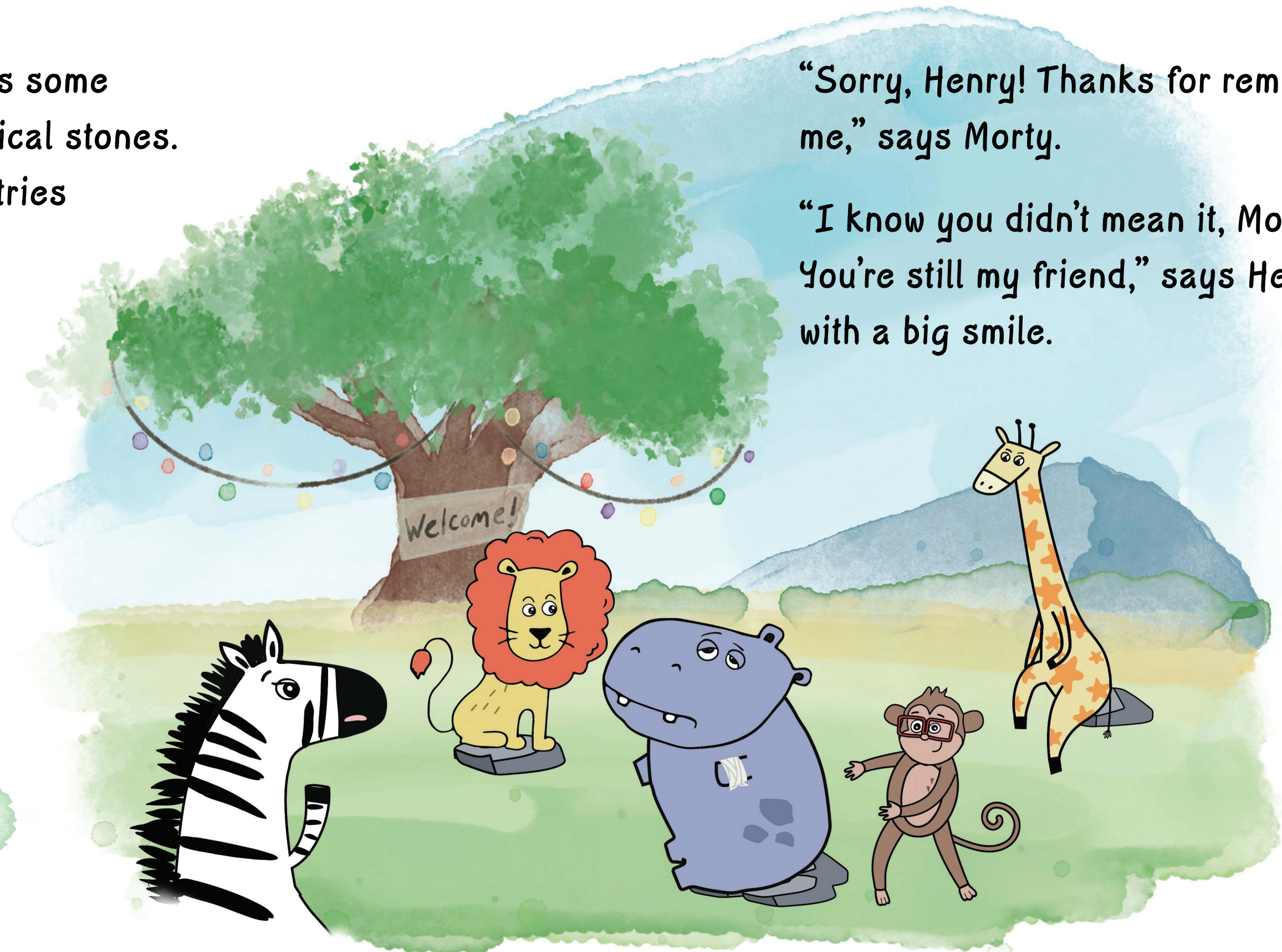
He tries to push Henry the Hippo out of his seat when Henry cries out, "Please be gentle! I bruise easily."



50% of people living with rare diseases are children.

"Sorry, Henry! Thanks for reminding me," says Morty.

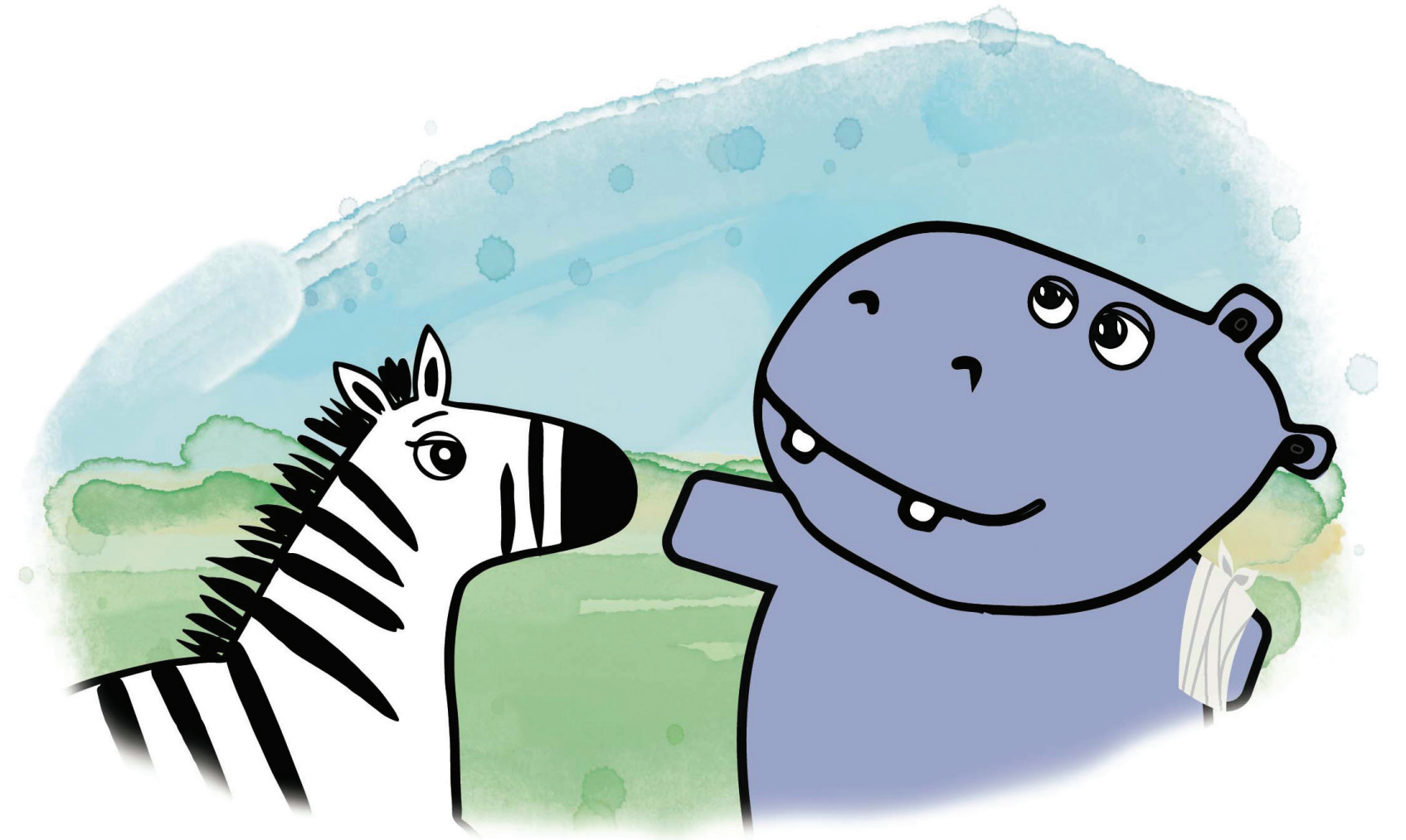
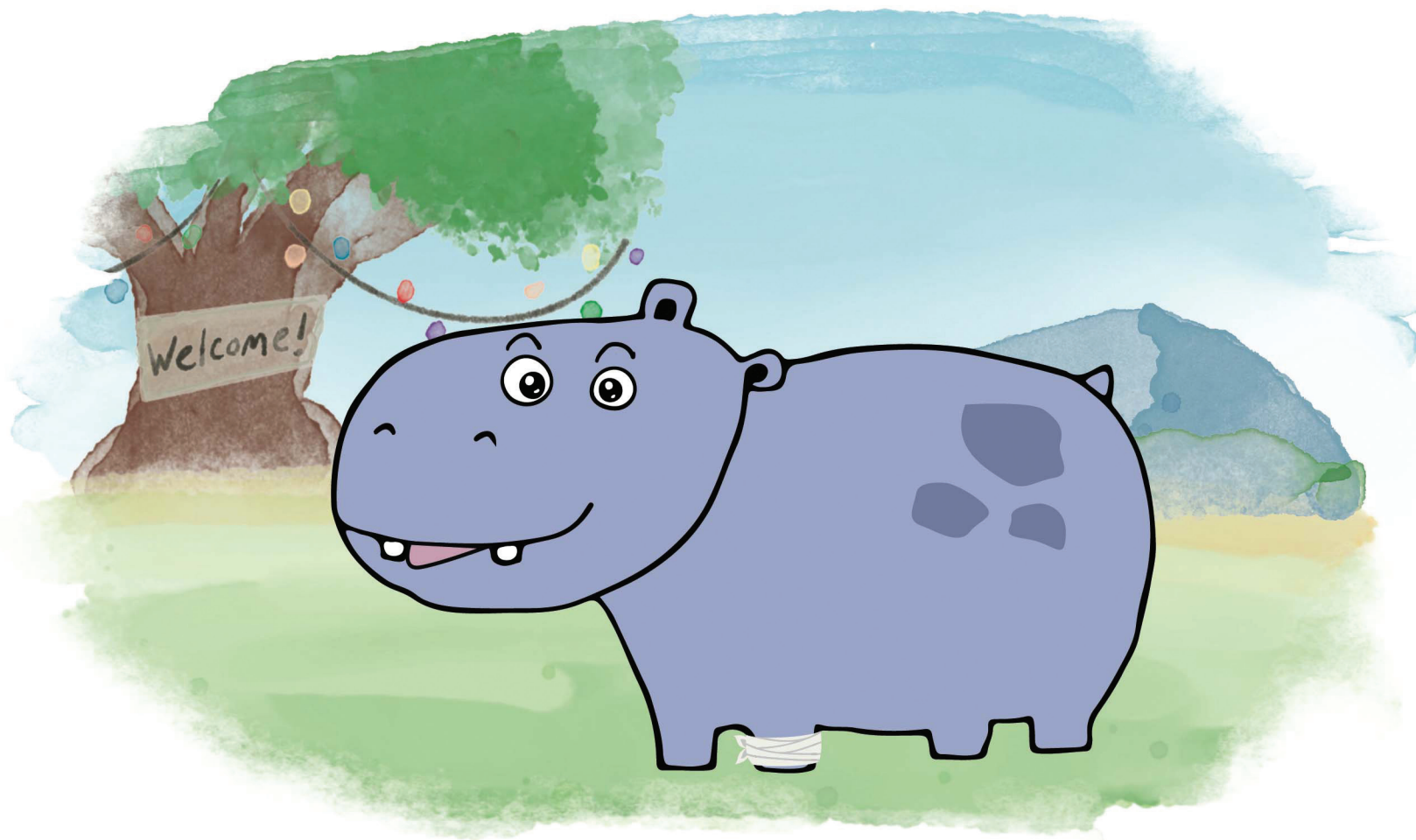
"I know you didn't mean it, Morty. You're still my friend," says Henry with a big smile.





Zara goes up to Henry and asks, "Why do you get bruises so easily?"

"I have a rare disease. Sometimes, a little bump will cause a huge bruise," Henry says. "If I have a really big bruise, my doctor gives me medicine."



"Do you talk about getting bruises often?" Zara asks.

"I do! The other animals know to be gentle with me, but that doesn't mean I can't play, too!" Henry says. "Friends don't know what you're going through unless you tell them."



Music starts playing. "I love this song!" Gabby says and begins singing along. All the animals start dancing, and Zara joins in on the fun. For a moment, she forgets her worries as she dances.

When the song is over, Zara walks up to Gabby and Lyle and asks, "Do all the animals here have a rare disease?"



"We all have something rare or unique that makes us special."

Zara pauses, then says, "I have rainbow stripes. I paint over them so no one will know."



“Really? But they look so real!” says Lyle. “You’re really talented.”

Zara blushes. “My doctor said sometimes zebras just have rainbow stripes.”

“Have you ever thought of not painting over your stripes?” asks Gabby.



There are 10000+ known rare diseases worldwide.



Zara is surprised. “I’ve never thought about that before. Maybe it’s time for a change.”

“Can you show us how to paint?” Gabby asks.

“Really? I would love to!” Zara replies.



The next day, Zara wakes up bright and early, excited to teach her new friends how to paint. She also skips painting over her stripes.

“I’m ready for my art lesson!” Gabby prances over.



“Let’s go!” Zara and Gabby meet up with the other animals. Everyone has a canvas and an easel, ready for their painting lessons.

Zara pulls out her paintbrush and shows the animals how she paints. Then, the animals practice on their own canvases. For the first time in her life, Zara feels comfortable around others.





After class, Gabby finds Zara. She painted a lovely portrait of Zara! “For my new best friend,” Gabby sings happily.



Rare Disease Day is recognized on the last day of February!

“Thank you! I’m so glad I told everyone about my stripes,” Zara says. “I wasn’t ready before, but I am now. It feels great knowing you all support me and my rare condition.”





As the other animals show off their paintings to one another, Zara realizes she's found a new group of friends to call her own.





“This book is a wonderful resource. It can help family members understand we all have something that makes us different and unique. It’s very relatable to rare diseases including NMOSD.”

— Sumaira A., Executive Director, The Sumaira Foundation  
Patient Advocacy Group for Neuromyelitis Optica Spectrum Disorder (NMOSD)

“Like the animals at the animal park, people living with hypophosphatasia have different stars and stripes that make each one of them unique. Celebrating our differences and coming together as a community with others who share similar journeys help us learn from each other and realize that we are not alone.”

— Deborah F., President and Founder, Soft Bones  
Patient Advocacy Group for Hypophosphatasia (HPP)